

0755: Tora! Tora! Tora!

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...and all hell broke loose

Oklahoma boy sees Arizona sink; clambors to safety amid bombing, confusion in harbor

He was on deck when the first bomb hit the USS Oklahoma.

An announcement had been made aboard the battleship ordering all sailors and Marines to report to their battle stations. The deck started to slant, he made his way through the casemate. As the ship turned, he stepped through the lifelines, the ship was at about a 45-degree angle.

He walked across the ship as it turned over and decided to get to the USS Maryland, just 30 feet away.

He jumped into the water, amid the confusion of that early-morning attack.

Red Brashier could not swim.

A lot went through the mind of the 21-year-old Oklahoma native, a Marine who had been in the military for several months when Japanese fighter pilots bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Foremost was the need to get aboard the Maryland, but Brashier also wanted to save the \$1.50 in change he had been saving, the coins clutched in his hand as he attempted to swim.

When Brashier came within about 12 feet of the battleship, someone threw out a line, which he grabbed and climbed aboard.

The ship had taken a small bomb, but was not damaged badly enough to sink. Two ships away, the USS Arizona was sinking into

the clear waters of Pearl Harbor, most its crew still aboard.

Once aboard the Maryland, Brashier pulled a sailor out of the water then helped get anti-aircraft guns in action.

He spent the night at Ford Island, the naval base at Pearl Harbor.

The attack lasted only about 2 1/2 hours but when the damage was surveyed, the United States Navy had lost five battleships: the Arizona, Oklahoma, Quincy, Vincenzo and Astoria, and countless servicemen.

During that brief attack, "a lot of servicemen panicked," Brashier remembers. Today Brashier has found several servicemen who share his memories of Pearl Harbor and will return to Hawaii for the 50th anniversary remembrance of the attack.

Brashier's military career included a near-run in with Japanese forces when he was aboard the USS Indianapolis

just one day before the Japanese attacked Wake Island in the Pacific. He continued to serve in the Marines until 1945, when he returned home and 12 years ago moved to Fall River with his wife, Mildred.

Brashier and other Kansas Pearl Harbor survivors recently received medals from Gov. Joan Finney, bearing the words, "For those who serve."

